

OCT 6 1964

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00149R000400490015-2

CPYRIGHT

U.S. Rejects 'Spy' Protest

Hits Red Charge In Attache Incident

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Star Staff Writer

The United States today rejected Russian charges that four Western military attaches were engaged in espionage activities while traveling from Moscow to Japan last week.

The State Department denial came on the heels of a Soviet note which ignored Western protests that Soviet officials had forcibly entered and searched the hotel rooms of the attaches—three Americans and one Briton—in the city of Khabarovsk, in the Soviet Far East.

A note delivered by the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the United States and British embassies in Moscow today accused the attaches of gathering "intelligence data on railway stations, bridges, tunnels, radar installations, airfields, location of military detachments and other objectives of defense significance."

Film, Notes Listed

"All this leaves no doubt that the trip... was a pre-planned and carefully prepared intelligence operation," the Russian statement said.

It added that the attaches had with them 900 frames of exposed film, notes of intelligence assignments in 26 notebooks, special optical apparatus and other "technical means of intelligence."

U.S. Rejects Charges

Marshall Wright, State Department assistant press spokesman, told reporters that the United States "rejected" the espionage charges. He said the Soviet reply is "unsatisfactory in view of the fact that it does not address itself to points in our protest."

The United States and Great Britain had protested primarily that 15 Soviet secret policemen had violated the diplomatic immunity of the attaches by forcing their way into the hotel rooms early in the morning of Sept. 29, by searching the attaches' possessions and by confiscating some of their belongings.

The incident in Khabarovsk is a reminder that on the espionage level of foreign affairs, East-West relations are as frigid as ever.

Department Gives Details

The State Department version of the story as released yesterday goes like this:

In mid-September, Nigel N. Laville, an assistant British naval attache, and the three Americans—Lt. Col. Karl B. Liewer of Nebraska, Col. George A. Aubrey, of Annapolis Md., and Maj. James F. Smith of Oklahoma—received permission from the Soviet Foreign Office to make a trip the length of Russia.

They were to go to Japan via the Trans-Siberia railroad and by ship from the Russian port of Nakhoda, adjoining the naval base at Vladivostok. From Japan they were to return to the Soviet Union via Hong Kong and India.

It was obvious to anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of intelligence that these attaches were on a fact-finding mission. Since their route was known to Russian officials and

since they would be trailed all the way, there was hardly anything of a clandestine nature that they would be able to do.

But just being a keen observer in the Soviet Union is a risky business. It is illegal and is considered espionage to photograph, sketch, or take notes about bridges, airfields, railroad terminals, factories or anything else remotely connected with defense matters.

Presumably, having diplomatic immunity, the attaches might have been freer with their picture taking or note writing than an ordinary tourist might have been.

The four Western attaches arrived in Hong Kong today en route back to Moscow. The Soviet note, however, suggested that they might not be allowed to re-enter Russia.

It is somewhat of a mystery why the Russians wanted to show their muscle. As they left after searching Aubrey's room, the head of the group said, "If you keep this secret, so will we."

This year alone, American and British attaches have had their car smashed (in Lenin-grad), been the victim of drug-ging (in Odessa) and had an angry crowd accuse them of spying (in Tula).

There have been uglier inci-

dents that neither side has made public.

Others Harassed

Military attaches are not the only ones subject to harassment. The United States Embassy, for instance, sends civilian diplomats on as many trips as possible. On these journeys to the hinterland, the officers are subject to the vagaries of the local security officers.

Sometimes, local book shops will close down "for inventory" when an American diplomat is suspected of being on a "book-buying expedition" for the Central Intelligence Agency. Highways suddenly have been closed for repairs and busline schedules cancelled when an American was on the way.

FOIAb3b

CPYRIGHT

CPYRIGHT